

Lyrics



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Alice Bee Bingham
from Lady Lindsay
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LYRICS, AND OTHER POEMS.

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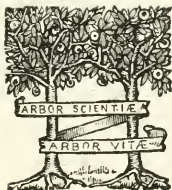
AND

OTHER POEMS,

BY

(LADY LINDSAY.)

Lindsay, Caroline Blanche Esq. d. 1870
"(Fitzroy), Lady.



LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY MOTHER.

OF these poems, none have been hitherto published, except the following:—"A Child Flower," "The East Neuk," and "Lavender," which appeared in "Atalanta," "A Woman's Story" in the "English Illustrated Magazine," "Her Last Letter" in "Macmillan's Magazine," and "Robin in Winter" in "About Robins."

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THE FIELD-WORKERS.

ALL day long we toil and labour,
Sow or garner, delve or reap,
Yet there comes a time, my neighbour,
When we rest before we sleep.
Then, and whatsoe'er the weather,
Be it early, be it late,
For a while we stand together,
Lingering at my garden gate.

Oft you bring a rose or pansy—
By your wall they bloom the best—
Hearts grow soft and kind, I fancy,
When the sun sinks in the west !
Oft, to make good-night the surer,
You repeat it at your door ;
Whilst my poor home seems the poorer,
As I lift the latch once more.

So, you've thought my life too lonely?

Nay, God knows what's best for me.

You've one bright-haired darling only ;

See, she climbs up on my knee !

She's half mine already, (bless her !)

Say, can her dead mother mind

If I tend the child, wash, dress her ?

She knows that I'm not unkind.

Well, we'll marry ; take and hold it,

This brown hand as seared as yours.

Here, in this hard north, of old it

Seems we women brought such dowers.

Let us love as well as labour ;

Side by side we'll delve or reap ;

Then, when we've grown old, dear neighbour,
 bour,

We may rest before we sleep !

FROM A WINDOW.

THERE'S a prisoned blackbird over the
way;

His cage hangs on the wall,
And his horizon small
Shows him the London brickwork night
and day.

And yet he sings, ah ! he gaily sings,
Of green lanes, of green trees,
The sun, the summer breeze,
A summer love, and all delightful things.

So we—though cruelly held and tied—
Within our songs may weave
That which we love, believe,
Or hope, or dream, and all sweet thoughts
beside.

THE LONELY FELL.

THE daylight fades, the road is steep,
The mist is wreathing fast ;
Then haste thee, traveller, if ere night
Thy journey should be past.
'Tis years ago since first I came,
Alone, thus here to dwell ;
By day, by night, I strain mine eyes
To gaze across the fell ;
And yet I'm fain to gaze in vain
Across the lonely fell.

'Tis years ago—I met him here,
Here on the silent heath ;
Upon my brow I felt his kiss,
Upon my cheek his breath.

'Twas but a moment—then he turned :

“ Dear heart, a short farewell ! ”

Nay, for the years have come and gone

Like shadows on the fell ;

And yet I'm fain to gaze in vain

Across the lonely fell.

A CHILD FLOWER.

ONLY a sick child peering down
At a narrow court and the world's sad
ills ;
Only a poor little pallid child,
Holding a nosegay of daffodils.

I saw her there in her thin black gown,
Leaning far out on the window-sill ;
And, as I look'd up with a pitiful smile,
She smil'd, and she threw me a daffodil.

Her fair hair shone like the crown of gold
Such brave little martyrs may wear in
heav'n,
To whom in this cruel dark city of ours
Sorrow and suff'ring are freely giv'n.

* * * * *

A month ago I pass'd down the street ;

'Twas crowded and busy at close of
day—

But yon window was shut, and the blind
was drawn,

And I sigh'd as I went once more on
my way.

THE PEARL GATHERER.

'Tis there—where the blue billows curl
In the perfum'd warm east,
Where, rapturous, meet sun and spray,
Whilst the breeze plays the priest ;
Where life's but a languid sweet day—
There the diver leaps for the pearl.

But below—in the twilight-bound deep,
In the solemn cold shade,
Where never a sound is heard,
Where he shrinks, half afraid,
From creatures that glare as they're
stirr'd—
His harvest of pearl he'll reap.

For he who a gem would find,
A treasure not bought,
Must leave the sun for the gloom,
And in stillness of thought,
Standing calm before possible doom,
Reign alone o'er the realm of his mind.

A WOMAN'S STORY.

Ay, 'twas thirty year ago—
All the garden was aglow :
Ruddy holyoaks, red roses,
Marigold and salvia posies,
Stately sunflow'rs, humble pansies—
“ Heart's-ease true as little Nan's is,”
Quoth my lover, speaking low.
In the orchard trilled a robin.
Ah me ! how my heart was throbbin',
Those long happy years ago !

Well, the tale's been often told :
Two things, pure love and pure gold,
Do not wane with passing fashion.
Life's cold without human passion.
Pick me that blue pansy yonder—

Thoughts for pansies, say you?—fonder
Grow our thoughts as we wax old.
Haply, as the rough path steepens,
And our feet lag, true love deepens—
Just because the tale's retold.

THE EAST NEUK.

'Tis a soft west wind, and no mist is in the
air,
And the herring-boats go sailing, sailing,
sailing far away,
Sailing fast and free
To the mighty open sea,
To the wide and golden east that lies
shining over there.

On the fresh green links we will sit awhile
and rest,
Whilst the boats shoot from the pier-head
and go sailing far away ;
Loud their brave men cheer,
Watching homesteads dear

And kirk and harbour-bar slide back, and
faces loved the best.

At the red gabled roofs from our height
we can look down,
Whilst beyond with silver track the boats
go sailing far away ;
Now only women bide
To mind the fireside,
And only children's voices ring within the
quiet town.

'Mong seaweed-spread fields the barefoot
lassies hoe,
Whilst the herring-boats go sailing, sailing,
sailing far away,
Through firth and northern seas,
T'ward Orkney and Hebrides—
God bless the hardy fishers who o'er stormy
waters go !

“QUEENE OF THE MEDOWES.”

MEADOW sweet, my meadow sweet,
Grown so lithe about my feet,
 Wild and free,
Under birch and under beech,
Pure and kind as Nature's speech,
 Fair to see !

Meadow sweet, my meadow sweet,
City walls can ne'er be meet,
 Dear, for thee !
Should I take thee from thy glade,
And bid thee bloom in prison'd shade ?
 Nay, let be.

YEARS AFTER.

I AM going home to our village,
Yon village beside the sea,
And my heart outcries with the memories
That float in, with the tide, to me.

I stand 'neath the silver moonlight,
My feet in the curling foam,
And there rises a spell that I know right
well,
From the waves and the boats and home.

My father 's long dead, and my mother ;
And he, whom I loved yet more,
One night sailed forth to the darkening
north
As he'd sailed out so oft before.

I prayed—I was sick with waiting—
That he'd come and thus ease my pain ;
But news spread from town how the ship
had gone down,
And my waiting was all in vain.

They told me the tale in the evening,
As I sat on the yellow sands
Where oft we had walked, and lingered,
and talked,
And clung to each other's hands.

Above me the white clouds are scudding,
Like sails on a deep blue main ;
Oh ! the winds blow strong where my true
love so long
In his cold wet grave has lain !

OF A RING.

A VERY little thing
Is this, a wedding-ring,
Yet much of joy or sorrow can it bring.

Within such margin round
Two fates are closely wound,
Two souls are one unto the other bound.

Herein lies paradise,
To every she that's wise,
Whilst he finds heav'n reflected in her
eyes.

It seems a burden light,
A bond they'd wish more tight,
As long as each in other finds delight :

A fetter far too strong,
A weight to drag along,
When vice or folly bid the heart do wrong.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

HAIL, the king's daughter from over the
sea !

Fair as the heath on the mountain is she ;
Pale as the lilies that grow in the wold ;
Crown'd with her tresses of dusky gold.

Hail the king's daughter from over the
sea !

The barons are kneeling on bended knee
As she passes along, serene and tall,
Through the joyous throng in the great
old hall.

* * * * *

The king doth stand on her fair right
hand ;

Her maidens are at her side ;
Her pages are bearing her broider'd train
With a grave and conscious pride.

The minstrel sings, the castle rings
With the sound of mirth and glee,
And outside the gate the people wait
The fair young queen to see.

Yet her eyes are dim, and they fill to the
brim

At the thought of what ne'er may be,
And her heart grows cold with a longing
untold

For the land that lies over the sea.

MOTHER'S VISION.

A LITTLE child's face, at the dead of night,
That comes to me, enwrap in wondrous
light,

A little child's fair presence that doth seem
Gladly familiar—ah, my heart, I dream,
I dream, alas ! I dream.

A little child's step that, with hasty tread,
Crosses the floor—a touch upon my bed—
Bright wide blue eyes that never learned
to weep,

A red mouth laughing—ah, my heart, I
sleep,
I sleep, alas ! I sleep.

A little child's kiss—now a murmured sigh,
A word almost—nay, this is not good-bye ;
I cannot spare thee ! not for thy dear sake,
Nor mine, nor any—ah, my heart, I wake,
I wake, alas ! I wake !

HER LAST LETTER.

'Tis but a line, a hurried scrawl,
And little seem the words to say,
Yet hold me in reproachful thrall :
“ You quarrelled with me yesterday ;
To-morrow you'll be sad.”

Ay, “ you'll be sad,” the words are few,
And yet they pierce my soul with pain ;
Ay, “ you'll be sad,” the words are true ;
They haunt me with prophetic strain :
“ To-morrow you'll be sad.”

We quarrelled—and for what? A word,
An idle speech that jarred the ear,

And thus in wrath our pulses stirr'd ;

Then came her letter : “ Dear, my dear,
To-morrow you'll be sad.”

Writ half in mirth, half in regret,

Last words that she should ever write,
Learn'd long ago, and yet, and yet,
Fraught with new pain to ear and sight :
“ To-morrow you'll be sad.”

BEYOND.

Do you know

Where the dear swallows go,
When winter is near and chill winds blow ?

Afar they fly,

In blue ether, so high
That we cannot follow their course through
the sky.

Yet in unknown lands of warmth and light
They live, and forget our winter's night.

Do you know

Where the dear children go,
When summer fades and chill Death waits ?

They soar beyond
Thoughts tender and fond,
And watch for our coming at Heaven's
gates.

And haply, in worlds outside our ken,
They pity the earthly sorrows of men.

A RHYME OF ARCADY.

SHEPHERD lads and lasses,

Come and trip in the dew ;

Come through woodland passes,

Come unto pastures new.

Come and dance in the merry moonlight,

For winds are soft and the stars are bright.

Shepherd lads and lasses,

Now your sheep are in fold,

Come and pluck sweet grasses,

And wander across the wold ;

Or sit and pipe to your Valentines,

Under the shade of the murmuring pines.

FIRESIDE.

GAZING into the fire,
With baby on my knee,
Ere the crimson coals expire,
How many things I see !

Into the future peering,
To read what life shall be ;
How much I'm hoping, fearing,
For the babe upon my knee !

AN OLD BOOK.

AN old torn book, with one pale rose
Crushed in its yellow pages :
I have not held it in my hand,
Nor read it thus, for ages.

Nay, formerly, the print was good ;
Or else mine eyes were better,
For now they're full of tears—too full
To see a single letter !

MY BROTHER AND I.

HALF hid in mist of time and many tears,
Stands the French ruined castle by the
 sea,
On a green hill, from whence so often
 we,
Hand locked in hand, gazed out across
 the years
Toward a future of unmeasured space—
A future fair as ocean's placid face.

Then he, my brother, passed beyond, to
 where
Death's great gate shuts out heav'n from
 earthly eyes,
Whilst I lived on, to learn, with sad
 surprise,

How man's injustice mars this lovely
sphere.

And yet, methinks, we both like children
stand

And bridge our sundered fates with clasp-
ing hand.

THE DUSTMAN.

I WELL recal how oft my mother said :

“ Farewell, dear sweet ! ’tis time to go to
bed.

Pray kiss good-night without a word or
sigh ;

I see the dustman plainly in your eye ! ”

Who might that dustman be ? I never
learned.

His phantom company in wrath I spurned ;
My blue eyes oped as wide as they would go,
His absence most convincingly to show.

Yet life brings changes. Oft, in weary
hours,

I'd fain be bound by childhood's chain of
flowers ;

I'd cry : " Dear friends, behold ! the dust-
man see

Here, in mine eye, as plain as plain can
be ! "

One day our lids must droop, whate'er our
will,

One day our hearts must lie quite cold,
quite still ;

That dustman weird, called Sleep in
childish days,

At last named Death, shall from our dim
eyes gaze.

MORNING.

FLY away unto the sun,
O thou early-rising lark !
Fly o'er meadow, moor, and park,
Now the day has just begun,
While such idle folks as I
On their downy pillows lie.

Fly away unto the north,
O thou brown-sailed fisher boat,
That so merrily dost float
On the silver-crested Forth !
While such foolish folks as I
At the window stand and sigh.

Fly away unto the clouds,
O my sorrow-laden thought !

There, perchance, shalt thou be wrought
Into rain or misty shrouds ;
While such lonely folks as I
From their aching hearts outcry.

TO A BABY.

BABY, what vague thoughts arise

In your eyes,

As you sit, red lips asunder,

And in wonder

Gaze round at your untried world,

Just unfurl'd?

Baby, you who come from Heaven,

And are given

Great grave thoughts, this world's so little,

Scarce one tittle

But will make you grieve and sigh,

By and bye.

Baby, if our hopes may clear

This dull sphere,

Change not. Be at long life's ending,
Homeward wending,
Angel-led to God again,
Free from stain.

SUMMER VOWS.

ALL among the golden corn,
 Summer vows are spoken ;
All amid the winter snow,
 Summer vows are broken.
Youth and Summer both go by ;
Haply we may sit and sigh,
 From our dreams awoken !

LITTLE THINGS.

A LITTLE song springs from a well of sorrow,
A little cloud brings heavy rain to-morrow,
A little love much after-grief doth borrow :
Child, child, deem not this world too hard,
Nor that thou wrongly art debarr'd
From aught—thou hast thy human dower
Of love and tears, thy life's short hour.

FOAM FANCY.

OVER the sea,
In days long ago,
There came a white ship
From a land of snow.

It brought to the children
A bushel of toys,
It brought to the grown folks
Sweet blessings and joys.

It brought to all sad hearts
A message of peace,
And to some weary pilgrims
A word of release.

It brought to the poet
The song he loved best—
So begins the old legend ;
I know not the rest.

THE FIDDLER'S FIDDLE.

THERE lived an old fiddler called Jinks,
Who dwelt by the town's high wall ;
He played in the morning, at noon and at
night,
He fiddled to great and small.
And, e'en as his fingers flew over the strings,
He murmured this weary song :
"Oh why, and oh why, is a man's life short,
When the life of a fiddle 's so long ?"

His house was uncared-for, his garden
grew waste,
All empty his money-bags ;
His children went barefoot, his dinner was
scant,
And his clothes hung in tatters and rags ;

But still, as he fiddled and fiddled away,
He sighed out his weary song :
“ Oh why, and oh why, is a man's life short,
When the life of a fiddle 's so long ? ”

He died, and his grandson—a noble
youth—

Rose up in the old man's place ;
He played the old viol, and handled the
bow

With vigour and deftness and grace.
Yet folks as they listened, entranced and
amazed,

Remembered that weary song :
“ Oh why, and oh why, is a man's life short,
When the life of a fiddle 's so long ? ”

A FAIRY TALE.

A PRINCESS dwelt in a high white tower,
A very long time ago,
And that she grew up and bloomed like a
flower
I'm perfectly sure you know.

One day there rode from a distant land
A king of mighty renown ;
He came, as you'll guess, to sue for her
hand,
And offer his heart and crown.

Then a second king, from over the sea,
Came sailing through cloud and mist ;

He knelt to the princess on bended knee,
And her lily-white hand he kiss'd.

But to each of those monarchs she said :

“Nay, nay,

The prince of my thoughts will come ;
He must come to-morrow if not to-day,
And carry me back to his home.”

He came ; his armour was ruddy gold,

His hair like the sunset rays.

Of the three he was youngest and best,
we're told—

They all lived to the end of their days.

A PHANTASY.

SAILING, sailing,
Over the sea—
Who will come
In a ship with me?

Out and beyond
To the starry East,
When the night is past,
And the storm has ceased.

Or drifting down
To the languid South,
Where the silver waves flow
To the broad river's mouth.

Or afar, afar
To the ice-bound North,
Where the weird snow-men
To battle go forth.

Or away and away
To the golden West,
Where the King of the Sunbeams
Has gone to his rest.

MOTHER'S SONG.

COME to thy nest,
Close to my breast,
Baby, dearest Baby ;
Here, on its bed,
Lay thy sweet head,
Cosily as may be.

Curl thy soft arm,
Careless and warm,
Around my neck and shoulder ;
Ah, how we miss
Mother's fond kiss,
Baby, when we're older !

WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

WHEN I was young, the world was fair—

(Sing, Marjorie,)

Now seems it dark and full of care,

And I must many a burden bear—

Ah me ! Ah me !

Folks smiled on me in days bygone—

(Sing, Marjorie,)

Now may I sit and make my moan,

Or, if I smile, smile all alone—

Ah me ! Ah me !

Farewell sweet days, so far, so near—

(Sing, Marjorie,)

No future like the past is dear,
No future shines so bright and clear—
Ah me! Ah me!

A ROMANCE.

A LITTLE maid sat sewing,
On the doorstep sewèd she :
“ I’ll bide me here till the hot noon’s near,
And my love rides back to me.”

He came. It was chilly evening ;
The tears from her eyelids fell ;
But when he drew nigh the teardrops grew
dry—
And there’s nothing more to tell.

THE EXILE.

SWALLOW, swallow, from over the sea,
What is the song thou art bringing for me?
What are the tidings thy sweet presence
bears?

Tenderest chidings, and longings, and
prayers?

Swallow, swallow, from over the sea,
Give me the message was given to thee!

Swallow, swallow, from lands far away,
Tell me, what words did my dear ones say?
Though here I am lonely their eyes watch
for me,

Gazing and yearning across the wide sea.
Swallow, swallow, from lands far away,
Bring me the thoughts of my loved ones
to-day!

LOVE'S MUSIC.

I.

LOVE thought one day to sing a lay—

He sang (poor foolish boy !)

Of love's delight and happiness,

Fond troth and lover's joy ;

Of hearts that grow to be as one,

Twin souls as fair as flow'rs,

And all the bliss that love can bring

Upon this world of ours.

But they that listened sneer'd or sighed,

And many turn'd away ;

For there were some who could not tell

What Love had meant to say.

Then Love was fain to sing again—

He tuned his lute anew :

The long weird chords thrill'd in the air,

And piercèd all hearts through.

He sang of love, and lover's grief,

Sad troth, and silent woe,

Of all the pain that love can bring

Upon this world below.

And, as he sang, the people wept

Because of that sweet lay ;

For there were none who could not tell

What Love had meant to say.

SONNET

(SUGGESTED BY MR. WATTS' PICTURE OF
LOVE AND DEATH).

YEA, Love is strong as life ; he casts out
fear,
And wrath, and hate, and all our envious
foes ;
He stands upon the threshold, quick to
close
The gate of happiness ere should appear
Death's dreaded presence—ay, but Death
draws near,
And large and grey the towering outline
grows,
Whose face is veil'd and hid ; and yet
Love knows
Full well, too well, alas ! that Death is
here.

Death tramples on the roses ; Death comes
in,
Though Love, with outstretch'd arms and
wings outspread,
Would bar the way—poor Love, whose
wings begin
To droop, half-torn as are the roses dead
Already at his feet—but Death must win,
And Love grows faint beneath that
ponderous tread !

A CAROL.

Ring the bells,
Ring the bells,
Ring the merry Christmas bells ;
And let their voice resound,
Around, around,
Till o'er the leas and o'er the fells,
The gladsome echo loudly tells
How we to-day
Are blithe and gay,
And how for all sad hearts we pray.
Ring the bells,
Ring the bells,
Ring the joyful Christmas bells !

Ring the bells,
Ring the bells,

Ring the merry Christmas bells.

So ring them high and low,

O'er ice and snow,

O'er craggèd hills and sombre dells,

While round the earth the message swells

How we to-day

Are blithe and gay,

And how for all sad hearts we pray.

Ring the bells,

Ring the bells,

Ring the joyful Christmas bells !

A CHRISTMAS FANCY.

THERE dwelt a little sprite
In a belfry high,
Up close to the sky,
And there, by day and night,
He heard the big bells clang with ever-new
delight.

He was a shrewish thing,
On mischief bent
With a wild intent ;
The bells he loved to ring,
But mostly was he glad discord and dread
to bring.

At times there passed a sound
Of melody faint,

As though a saint
Sang low ; folks stood spell-bound,
Then on a sudden gasped—for silence
reigned around.

Yet, when in church there pealed
The organ loud,
And the reverent crowd
Hymned praise, or meekly kneeled—
Down came a hideous din, as though fiends
fought and skreeled.

It was the elf, no doubt—
So wise men said,
With shake of head ;
And maids scarce ventured out
When storm-winds blew, lest evil luck
should come about.

And far away at sea,
In evening late,
The mariner's fate
Wailed itself plaintively
From that same belfry tower girt by an ivy
tree.

And children screamed for naught ;
And peaceful men,
Now and agen,
Heard battle-sounds loud fraught
With stirring trumpet-calls, and left their
homes distraught.

Thus homely folks were dazed ;
And all the while,
With wicked smile,
The sprite peered down half-crazed,
Because of joy to make this silly world
amazed.

Only on Christmas morn—
Ay, once a year—
He bent his ear
And shrank back all forlorn,
Whilst o'er the vale the bells' sweet carol-
ling was borne.

At every Christmas tide
He was undone :
His power right gone.
When peace on earth doth stay,
'Tis angels ring the bells—for thus the
peasant people say.

DURING ILLNESS.

IF it should please the Lord I die,
And lie
Beneath the greensward calm and still—
His will
Be mine without regret or sigh.

Yet if it please the Lord I stay
To-day,
And meet once more the din and strife
Of life—
Content, I'll arm me for the fray.

HUMAN LITTLENESS.

BE thou content to leave thy life, thy fate,
In guidance to thy Maker ;
Of all this mighty world wherein thou art
Thou canst not shift one acre.

The world rolls on, the seasons come and
go,
Thy will decides no tittle ;
And for thy future, be it good or ill,
Thou may'st decree as little.

* * *

GOD's will be done,
He knows what's best ;
Finish duty begun,
Leave Him the rest !

SONGS OF NATURE.

IN THE WOODS.

I LOVE to roam in the woods
When the green leaves are dying,
I love to roam in the woods
Where the brown leaves are lying,
And see the wild dove on the wing,
And hear the tuneful robin sing :
“ ’Tis autumn, ’tis autumn, ’tis golden
autumn now,
But soon cometh winter, with cold winds
and snow.”

I love to roam in the woods
When the dead leaves are falling,
I love to roam in the woods
Where the wood-nymphs are calling,

And hear the chant of goblin men
Who gather fuel in the glen :
“ ’Tis autumn, ’tis autumn, ’tis golden
autumn now,
But soon cometh winter, with cold winds
and snow.”

THE COMING OF SPRING.

STERN Winter reigns—a tyrant king—
He bids the rough winds rave and blow,
And builds us prison-walls of snow.

But Spring,
Green-girdled Spring, comes surely ;
And in her pride of youth
Knowing nor love nor ruth,
Shall bind him down securely.

He will not yield in anything
To that usurper—let him die !
For him will no man grieve or sigh.

But Spring,
Triumphant Spring, shall glory ;
So bid the earth rejoice,
And let the merry voice
Of birds proclaim the story !

AMONG THE WATER WAYS.

WHERE the green reeds bend and quiver
On the narrow winding river,

There I'll moor my boat at noon :
Where the sunbeams glint and shiver,
Prisoned by the darkness soon.

Deep down where the water eddies,
Where the moor-hen's silent bed is,
There I'll dream long hours away :
By the lilies in the sedges,
Where the tiny ripples play.

Round and round within the hollows
O'er the water skim the swallows,
Flying, flying fast and low :
And the light wind softly follows,
And the reeds bend to and fro.

RICHMOND PARK IN OCTOBER.

THE tawny oaks, despite wild winds that
sear,

Yet keep their leaves ; clear is the
distant view ;

Across the face of heav'n doth not appear
One cloud or speck to mar the peaceful
blue.

Th' unfrighted deer, 'mong golden bracken
strayed,

Scarce turn to watch our footsteps on
the grass ;

Like flecks of sunshine scattered in the
glade

Down to the sapphire water-streak they
pass.

The city lies out yonder—there folks go
And come, opprest with stir and din of
life,
Although so near fresh hawthorn-berries
grow,
The sweet birds sing, the world seems
free from strife.

For here is shed a beauty o'er the scene,
To nature as to us by autumn brought :
'Time's deepening glow—grave tender
thoughts between—
And days of strength of which our
youth knew naught.

THE WIND AND THE SEA.

I SAT beside the shore, and heard the
voice of the wind :

“O mighty sea, why sleepest thou?
Arouse thee, I am here, why sleepest
now?

I come, and with me follow far behind
The rains and storms to which the
earth shall bow.”

I sat beside the shore, and heard the
voice of the sea :

“O mighty wind, why art thou here?
Why didst thou leave thy hills and
clouds, to peer

Into my slumbers, and awaken me?
Begone! I rave and rage when thou
art near!”

ROBIN IN WINTER.

A BIRD flew out from the green holly
hedge,

And sang me a sweet song to-day ;

Beside me he perched on the white
window-ledge,

And carolled his innocent lay.

With a hey and a ho, sang my pretty
Robin low :

“There’s somebody coming at Christmas,
you know.”

The sun shone out and the clouds went
by,

The wind died softly away ;

A joy seemed spread over earth and sky,

And my heart grew tender and gay.

With a hey and a ho, sang my pretty

Robin low :

“There’s somebody coming at Christmas,
you know.”

GLOAMING.

THE setting sun has dropt below the
sandy reach ;

The laggard rooks come home, belated,
from the beach ;

Here in the garden-beds the flowers close
their eyes,

And twilight's soft wan mist across the
woodland lies.

O is not this most sweet of any time or
hour,

After the garish day, and ere the night-
clouds lower ?

'Tis as though Nature's self should pause
upon her way,

Grey-clad and pilgrim-like, to meditate
and pray.

MERMAIDS' VOICES.

THE golden moon peers through the rifted
clouds,

Now gleams the quiet sea,

And gentle winds unto our ears do bring

The songs that plaintive mermaids sing

With mournful phantasy,

And strange weird minstrelsy,

In magic caves beneath the echoing sea.

The moonbeams play upon the masts and
shrouds,

And bid the darkness flee,

And gentle voices in our ears do ring,

And songs that plaintive mermaids sing
 With mournful phantasy,
 And strange weird minstrelsy,
In magic caves beneath the echoing sea.

LARGO BAY.

“I cuist my line in Largo Bay.”

Down by the shore, on a quiet summer
even,

All is silver grey, calm sea and shelving
sand ;

Just a glimmering light shines over toward
Leven,

And a streak of azure lies on the southern
land.

Through the balmy air the plover's cry
falls shrilly,

Mingling with the measure of the slowly
rising tide ;

Round the headland comes the white mist
 weird and chilly,
Making nearness mystery, and distance
 yet more wide.

By the salmon-nets a fisherman is bending :
Dark his boat and he in the twilight's
 ghostly charm ;
Whilst two lovers yonder, homeward
 slowly wending,
O'er the grey-green links go, silent, arm-
 in-arm.

TO A WHITE ROSE WITH PINK
BUDS.

WHAT, is it so long,
Rose, since thou wert rosy,
Thy sweet mates among,
Press'd in clust'ring posy?

Art thou white for grief,
Wan because time passes
Fading every leaf,
Withering all the grasses?

Is it because age
Pales thy blush of dreaming,
Showing life's cold page
Unlike its first seeming?

Dost recal a wrong?
Or some past sad yearning?
Nightingale's love song
Gone beyond returning?

Dainty emblem thou—
Silence thy quaint meaning—
Why thy perfumed brow
Sorrowfully leaning?

Tell the secret hid
Deep in snowy chalice,
'Tender petals 'mid,
Far from thorns and malice!

LAVENDER.

A PERFUM'D sprig of lavender

You gave, dear child, to me ;

It grew, you said, by the red rose bed,

And under the jessamine tree.

'Twas sweet, ay, sweet from many things ;

But, (sweeter than all,) with scent

Of long past years and laughter and tears

It to me was redolent.

A SUNSET SHELL.¹

SUNSET all in a shell?
The luminous West imprisoned
And held in the palm of your hand?
Yon mystic opalesque land,
The dream scarce a poet can tell,
Minimised, ay, rechristened
Here, in a sunset shell?

Just cast up by the sea
In the wet froth close to our seeking,
Painted clove-pink by the maids
Who dwell in the ocean shades,
A frail thing it seems to be,
With seaweed and brine yet reeking,
Here cast up by the sea.

¹ There is a small shell so named.

Is the sky under spell?
Nay, it may surely be wisest
Broad firmaments so to view,
Complete in tone and in hue.
Thy roof-tree's coloured full well,
Poor little mollusc that risest
Up on the grey sea swell!

Our world like thine is small;
Are we not made by one Maker?
And is the gold sunlight more
Than a perfect shell on the shore?
To Him who created all
An inch is as lov'd as an acre,
And the great the same as the small.

Perchance, as for whelks, to us
This planet's dark and half closèd;

Perchance on some walls outside
The reflex of heav'n is descried,
Or heaven itself, pure, rosied,
Is the converse of life spent thus.

IN THE LEA OF THE WIND.

'Tis pleasant to sit in the shelter,
When the wind whistles overhead,
And the leaves go helter-skelter,
(The leaves that are yellow and red,)
Whilst the green boughs that cling to the
 shuddering trees
Are whirling and swirling above in the
 breeze.

And sleep overcomes mine eyes,
As I sit and dream at noonday ;
And the voice of the Future cries
In the blast, and it seems to say :
“ Thou holdest thy life in thine hand, in
 thy will ;
Thy life is immortal for good or for ill ! ”

THE SEASONS.

SPRING and Summer bid the hills
With verdure be enfolden ;
Autumn comes with lavish hand
To turn the green leaves golden ;
Churlish Winter frowns, nor will
To any be beholden ;
But strips gold glory from each tree,
Till woods and forests naked be.

SONGS OF LOVE.

(HER SONGS.)

THE FATE OF A SONG.

I MADE a foolish little song,
And sent it to my love one day.
O'er sea and lea 'twas borne along ;
For he was far away.

Scarce was it sped when I betook
Myself to tears that it, not I,
Should touch his hand, and meet his look,
Or on his dear heart lie.

But when the summer came once more,
And we two trod the flowery mead ;
Nor he nor I, our partings o'er,
Cared that poor song to read.

TO-DAY.

Is it to-day that I'll meet him? The trees
And the blossoms are answering "yes";
For Nature's kind self has joyfully donned
Her newest and loveliest dress,
And Zephyr with delicate finger weaves
My lov'd one's name in the rustling leaves.

Is it to-day that I'll see him? Ah me!
Fain would I be far more fair!
I long for the sea-depth to colour mine
 eyes,
And the sunbeams to garland my hair;
Yet this ignorant heart its joy cannot teach
To shine in my looks or ring in my speech.

Hark, how the thrush sings ! It carols
aloud,

With never a fear nor sigh ;

Then why should I doubt ? The glad-
hearted flowers

And birds have less promise than I.

With the summer-warm noon my love
speeds on his way ;

'Tis to-day that I'll greet him—to-day, ay,
to-day !

LOVE'S LITANY.

I AM longing for thee, dear, longing, O so
wearily !

I am sighing for thee, dear, sighing, O so
drearly !

I am mourning for thee, dear, mourning,
O so sadly !

I am hoping for thee, dear, hoping, O so
gladly !

I am yearning for thee, dear, yearning, O
so truly !

I am waiting for thee, dear, waiting, O so
duly !

I am pining for thee, dear, pining, O so
lonely !

I am weeping for thee, dear, weeping for
thee only.

I am sobbing for thee, dear, sobbing, O
so wildly !

I am praying for thee, dear, patiently and
mildly.

HESPER.

O FOR a light little boat,
For you and me
To go out to sea,
And float and drift, and drift and float
Through the sunset golden and red, afar
Unto the land of the evening star.

When the sky is tender o'erhead,
And the twilight still
Creeps along the hill,
When the sun has dropt in his golden bed,
It shines with a brilliant light afar,
That mystic and wonderful evening star.

And here, as we silently gaze,
For ever doth rise

In my heart, in mine eyes,
A longing to climb those silver rays,
A longing to wander, hand in hand
With you, O my love, to that starry land !

WISHES.

IN the meadows,
All among the meadows,
Where the yellow cowslips blow,—
There would I sing,
' And weave me wreaths of all the flow'rs
that grow
Beneath the fragrant footsteps of the
Spring.

In the cornfields,
All among the cornfields,
Where the sheaves are red as gold,—
There would I be,
Where on a summer morn our love we
told
That made the world so very sweet to me.

By the rushes,
All among the rushes,
Where the cool green water flows,—
There would I rest,
And lay my weary head in chill repose,
And fold my tired hands upon my breast.

THE LILAC TREE.

I STOOD beneath the lilac tree,
 (O lilac tree ! O lilac tree !)
It seemed my love came back to me,
 Once more to me, once more to me ;
And from his eyes shone happy light,
And in his heart beat hopes as bright,
Ay, as when we, just I and he,
Held ancient tryst beneath that tree.

I dreamed beneath the lilac tree,
 (O lilac tree ! O lilac tree !)
And in the future sought to see,
 To read and see, to read and see.
The chaffinch chirped behind the leaves,
The sparrow twittered from the eaves :
“What is 't to thee ? What is 't to thee ?
For that shall be must be, must be.”

I wept beneath the lilac tree,
 (O lilac tree ! O lilac tree !)
I wot my love has gone from me,
 Gone far from me, yes, far from me.
The bleak wind bids the blossoms fall ;
And yet my heart is held in thrall,
 (O lilac tree ! O lilac tree !)
As though my love were here with me !

A WOMAN'S PLEADING.

WHEN you're away,
My heart is sad ;
When you return
My heart grows glad.

When you are kind
The world seems bliss ;
When you are gay
I long for a kiss.

When you're distressed
I share your woe,
And when you weep
My salt tears flow.

But should you chide
I'd hang my head,
And if e'er you grow weary
I'll wish me dead !

MY HEART IS A LUTE.

ALAS, that my heart is a lute,
Whereon you have learn'd to play !
For a many years it was mute,
Until one summer's day
You took it, and touched it, and made it
 thrill,
And it thrills and throbs, and quivers still !

I had known you, dear, so long !
Yet my heart did not tell me why
It should burst one morn into song,
And wake to new life with a cry,
Like a babe that sees the light of the sun,
And for whom this great world has just
 begun.

Your lute is enshrined, cased in,
Kept close with love's magic key,
So no hand but yours can win
And wake it to minstrelsy ;
Yet leave it not silent too long, nor alone,
Lest the strings should break, and the
music be done.

FLOWER MESSAGE.

I'LL give my love a posy ;
I'll pluck it e'en to-day,
Fair as my hopes, as rosy,
As tender, and as gay.

I'll send my love the garland
My faithful hands shall twine,
To give him in a far land
The sweet thoughts that are mine.

I'll make a chain of flowers,
Strong as a chain may be ;
I'll weave with magic powers
And bind my love to me.

ONCE, ONCE UPON A TIME.

ONCE, once upon a time—

We were young, the world was new,

Love was fresh as morning dew—

It was long ago, you know,

Dearest, long ago.

Once, once you took my hand—

“Little hand, hold tight the thread

Binding both our lives,” you said—

It was long ago, you know,

Dearest, long ago.

Once, once you stroked my hair—

“Who,” you asked, “in all the world

Snares with net so golden-curl’d?”

It was long ago, you know,

Dearest, long ago.

Once, once you kiss'd my cheek—
“Plighted troth thus fondly given
Ne'er is broke,” you cried, “nor riven!”
It was long ago, you know,
Dearest, long ago.

WOULD THAT MY HEART WERE
A SHIP !

MANY a day, dear, many a day,
Far and away, dear, far and away,
My heart goes drifting to thee ;
Would that my heart were a ship to sail
On a twilight eve, when the skies are pale,
O'er the shimmering silent sea !

I'd guide her course by the light of the
stars,
My loving thoughts should be ropes and
spars,
My truth should the ballast be.
I'd have fair Hope at the helm to steer,

And the skipper should be the Memory
 dear

 That draws my fond soul to thee.

And ay, that good ship should speed on
 her way,

And anchor at last in a quiet bay

 On the fringe of a sheltered strand ;

Whilst gentle dreams should rock us to
 rest,

My harbour of refuge thy faithful breast,

 Thy heart, dear, my promised land.

LOVE CHANT.

WHEN we twain were young, dear,
We did not heed so much ;
Love, on our hearts' fresh virginals,
Played with a careless touch.

Now we twain are old, dear,
Heart-strings seem tuned too high ;
Life strikes a solemn chord thereon,
And then they break and die.

SONGS OF LOVE.

(HIS SONGS.)



O FOR A MINSTREL'S VOICE !

O FOR a minstrel's voice to sigh
In sweet refrain as my queen comes by !
O for a lute and a roundelay
To lull her to sleep on a summer's day !

My love she opens her lattice wide
To the brown-robed thrush that warbles
outside ;

My lady she smiles at a beggar child,
But on me, alas ! hath she seldom smiled.

My love she kisses the red June rose
That close and fond by her casement
blows ;

My lady she sings to the murmuring bee—
But never a song hath she sung for me.

O would that I were a pale moon ray,
At her window's lattice to linger and stay,
Or yon molten sunbeam that dares to
 press
Her fair white brow in its glad caress !

MY LOVE IS LIKE THE SEA.

“ Phillis is my only joy,
Faithless as the winds or seas.”
(Sir C. Sedley.)

My love is like the sea,
As changeful and as free ;
Sometimes she's angry, sometimes rough,
Yet oft she's smooth and calm enough—
Ay, much too calm for me.

My love is like the sky,
As distant and as high ;
Perchance she's kind, and fair, and bright,
Perchance she's stormy—tearful quite—
Alas ! I scarce know why.

For thus I'm tempest-toss'd,
A drifting skiff at most ;
I dare the waves, risk cloud and rain,
I ever tempt my fate again,
Nor care if I be lost.

DREAMLAND.

WILT thou come with me to Dreamland?

Dreamland lies over the sea ;

We will float on a raft of poppies

That I have entwined for thee.

Wilt thou come with me to Dreamland ?

It lies there beyond the hill ;

Thou shalt travel, thy head on my shoulder,

Enwrapt in thy slumber still.

Wilt thou come with me to Dreamland ?

The stars shall lend us their light,

Or the mystical pale Aurora

Shall guide our steps through the night.

Wilt thou come with me to Dreamland ?

With thy tenderest thoughts take wing,
And wander in yon fair kingdom,
Where Love is the only king.

IF I HAD A CROWN.

IF I had a crown I would give it to thee—
A crown to encircle thy nut-brown hair—
I would say : “O fairest of all the fair !
I have made thee queen, come and dwell
with me.”

If I had a fortune I'd say to thee :
“Here is silver and gold to buy thee a
gown ;
Here are pearls for thy neck ; let us go to
the town,
And whatever doth please thee thine own
shall be.”

If I had a heart I would offer it thee—
A trophy to toy with, or haply to wear—
But mine has been broken in twain, I
 declare,
By a thief that thou knowest who stole it
 from me !

GOLDEN DAYS.

SWEET, remember
Golden days we spent together,
In the mellow autumn weather,
In the balmy bright September—
Sweet, remember !

Sweet, forget them !
Youth and joy last not for ever ;
When from golden days you sever,
Dearest, stay not to regret them—
Sweet, forget them !

CHANGES.

WE sat among the cornfields, you and I,
The crimson sun was setting in the sea,
The sound of evening bells came o'er the
lea—

I laughed a happy laugh ; you sighed a
sigh.

I mind me how the sunbeams kissed your
hair,
The light wind fanned your cheek with
fond caress,
Played in the warm folds of your soft white
dress,
And singing birds proclaimed that you
were fair.

Now we are parted, dear, yes, you and I,
With broad lands and wide seas betwixt
us two ;

I sit among the cornfields here, and you ?
Perchance you laugh a happy laugh—I
sigh.

DOUBTING.

NAY, do not ask me once again,
Thy very doubting gives me pain ;
Have I not said ? (and, while I speak,
Here's hand on hand, and cheek on
cheek—)

Dear heart, I love thee.

And yet, thy doubt to love allied
Is sweet, so sweet I dare not chide.
Cease not thy love, cease not thy doubt ;
O child, I could not live without !

Dear heart, I love thee.

For love 's not love that dreads no ill,
And doubt like this means loving still,

And both together fill thy heart,
To make thee lovely as thou art ;
Dear heart, I love thee.

LOVER'S THOUGHTS.

I.

MAKE me a flower-bed like a heart,
Plant a white lily therein,
Fence it with heart's-ease and lavender,
Just for the faith that I have in her
Whom one day I may win.

There shall my lily be shrined apart,
Fragrant with love and grace,
For thus, in the pleasaunce fair of my
thought
Sweet-garlanded, tenderly, purely wrought,
Shines out my lady's face.

II.

DEAR, when I protest
I'll give you leave to doubt me ;
My silence fears no test,
My life may speak without me.

Those whose love 's least true
Most often seek to show it ;
My love 's so great for you,
I care not you should know it.

III.

DEAR eyes so loving and so true,
I know not which is dearer,
The truth within those wells of blue,
Or love that shines yet clearer ;
For love on truth alone doth thrive and
 feed,
And truth begets the love that 's love
 indeed.

IV.

WHAT are my darling's eyes? They are
blue as wild cornflowers.

What are my darling's looks? They are
soft as summer hours.

What are my darling's lips? They are red
as autumn roses.

What are my darling's smiles? They are
sweet as springtide posies.

What are my darling's thoughts? They
are pure as lambs in fold.

What is my darling's heart? 'Tis a treasure
of pearl and gold.

What is my darling's soul? 'Tis a shrine
where angels sing.

What is my darling's love? 'Tis a kingdom
where I am king.

V.

IF love might keep thee young, my sweet,
Then shouldst thou be immortal ;
Thou shouldst not age with years or grief,
Nor pass through death's grim portal.

If love might keep thee fair, my sweet,
No Grace should be so peerless ;
Thy locks should never blanch with time,
Thine eyes grow dim or cheerless.

But love can do no more than this :
In life to love thee ever,
And when thou diest love thee still,
And cease from loving never !

VI.

ONCE I was heart-sick, laden with such
grief

I called on Death to ease me of my
sorrow ;

He answered not—but Love came on the
morrow,

And he, who'd wounded, gave my soul
relief.

VII.

As is one star, seen in a dark and murky
sky ;

As is one flower that blooms upon a barren
lea ;

As is a well of water, when all springs
are dry ;

As is a ship, hail'd by a drowning soul at
sea ;

As is the dawn unto the sick and ill at
ease ;

As is sweet sleep to them that sad and
weary be ;

As in the desert is a kind and gentle breeze—

So is thy love, my love, through all my
life to me !

A PAINTED MISSAL.

The other day I chanc'd to look
At the beautiful page of an ancient book.
'Twas painted in gold and in ultramarine,
Vermilion, and carmine, and tenderest
green ;
As fresh were the colours as though they'd
been laid
On the vellum but yesterday—yet folks
said
The work was just four centuries old.
Ah, man's outlived by madder and gold,
And time cannot stay like a parchment
page
That carries God's story from age to age !

I gazed at the book as it lay on my knee ;

Its dead world rose and surrounded me :
The years ebbed back, and to me it seemed
That in Florence I dwelt, and lived, not
dreamed.

I walked through a garden I knew full
well,
To seek one grave monk in his convent
cell.

I passed down a path as familiar as sweet ;
I brushed the blue gentian with eager feet ;
I parted the lilies—and there I stood,
Awhile, at the fringe of the ilex wood.
In the belfry all the bells were asleep ;
From the porch one lay brother did vigil
keep,
And yonder, across the warm white wall,
A lizard slid into the cypress tall.

I made my way up the broad stone stair,

Though many a white-robed monk was
there ;

I gazed down into the cloister calm,
Where the west wind carried the citron's
balm,

Where a young monk, burnished pail in
hand,

Stood barefoot on the glittering sand,

Ready the water pure to draw

From a great stone well that I plainly saw

Under pomegranate trees, in a nook

'Mid vines that lay curl'd like a shepherd's
crook.

This was the door ; it had bolt and bar,

But to-day it seemed to be just ajar.

I pushed it open, and entered the cell

Where my friend would be busy if all were
well.

Ay, here he sat at the high oak desk,
Carved deep with many an arabesque :
A gaunt white figure 'gainst wall of white,
His austere face in a flood of light.
The light came streaming the window
 through—
A narrow streak of cerulean blue,
With a peep of the hills and the city that
 lay
Like a diamond bright in the keen midday.

The artist paused in his blazoned line.
The kind eyes were raised to encounter
 mine.
The pen was lifted, the work awhile
Put by ; the thin face warm'd with a
 smile.
Yet presently, as on the missal I gazed,

And tremblingly spoke, and anxiously
praised,

One wan vein'd finger showed me the
place

In the page, where the brush with its
purple should trace

A chain of pansies my touch might now
spill

On the breezy edge of the window sill,

And where butterflies, yellow as gold
kingcup,

On yon painted rosebud to-morrow must
sup.

And all adown ran the lettering fair :

Beati omnes in workmanship rare,

Scarlet initial that burned, as I read,

On the chrome like a poppy in summer
corn bed ;

Gloria patri et filio, and then :

Spiritui sancto, whilst far down : *amen*.

And I looked and I looked, till the page
seemed to glow

Like a garden of glory where heaven's buds
blow,

Till a deep voice sighed softly : " Farewell,
O my son !

For life is but short, and my task is scarce
done,

And needs must I write ; through long
cycles to come,

This message shall speak when the scribe
has gone home.

Our hands are but human, yet art is
divine

If the glory of God shine through colour
and line."

* * * * *

Then I woke. Lo, the book lay outspread
on my knee !

But the monk in his cell could I never-
more see.

TWO WAYS.

A MOTHER sang unto her babe :
“God’s way is not our way,” she said.
It seemed a lesson hard to teach,
That lesson which she daily read :
Too hard to tell a little child
Who sat upon her knee at play ;
Too hard for life, too hard for love,
And yet—God’s way is not our way !

The child grew fast, his step waxed firm,
Scarce any more was he a child ;
And boyhood brought a thousand pranks.
Like others, he was rough and wild.
Yet for each mischance that befel,
Whilst many a tear the mother shed,

She pray'd him keep the narrow path :
"God's way is not our way," she said.

Man was he now, ay, all alone
To fray his progress through the world,
To keep heart pure, faith and hope high,
And his white banner hold unfurl'd.
Temptations thickened, closed around,
Yet, by a mother's spirit led,
He turned his back on golden sin :
"This way is not God's way," he said.

Then came misfortune—one by one
His nearest and his dearest died,
Borne from him 'spite his bitter tears,
Laid in the churchyard, side by side.
And as the mocking neighbours saw
Him sit aloof with bended head :

“Be this thy wisdom, Sir?” they cried.

“God’s way is not our way,” he said.

Next lost he fame, and name, and wealth,
And all the things men hold most dear,
So none to him spake kindly word,
And none to him would lend an ear.
Scarce had he pittance from a dole,
Scarce earned he daily drink or bread ;
And yet, with meek and folded hands :
“God’s way is not our way,” he said.

Thus grew he old ; ambitions pass’d
Above him—storm-clouds blown by wind.
Hope faded ; vanished were all joys ;
Content alone was left behind.
Suspicion touched him : “See, yon wretch,
A cur by fiends and witches fed !

Ill-omened wizard ! Cast him forth ! ”

God’s way is oft-times hard to tread.

They took him, scourged him, stoned him
till

The red blood gushed from every wound,

Till at their feet that martyr lay,

Fainting, dim-eyed, defenceless, bound.

He saw them not ; his joyful soul

Viewed heav’n that opened clear as day ;

God’s angels sang, whilst his weak breath

Murmured : “ Thy way shall be our way ! ”

A LEGEND OF OLD.

IN a green valley, nestling at the feet
Of mighty mountains—hid in blossoms
sweet,
And fruiting chestnuts, and warm under-
wood,
Beside a clear and purling stream—there
stood
(Long ages since) from worldly turmoil
shut
And screened aloof, a lowly, lonely hut,
Where dwelt a pious hermit. There he
pass'd
His blameless life ; the peaceful days ran
fast,
Gathering to peaceful years above his head,

Like those white clouds that o'er the high
 peaks sped,
Drifting, snow-pure, and tinged by heaven's
 own light,
Close to God's sky, scarce within human
 sight.

Strange, as he weaker grew, by Time sore
 prest,
He added yet one duty to the rest :
Each evening, when the sunset fervour
 glowed
Upon the crags above, from rills that flowed
Beside his hut, the good man filled two
 jars
Of bubbling water, shining like the stars,
Cooling and slaking to all parching need ;
And these, for God's sweet glory, without
 meed

Or praise, he bore to the hill-top at night,
Though wellnigh fainting when he reached
the height.

But there, where plants on arid rugged
ground

Grew maimed and sere, where wild birds
never found

The water-source they thirsted for, that gift
Was truly welcome ; down each gaping rift
The wondrous stream poured as 'twould
never cease,

Whilst he, the giver, smiled in joy and
peace.

Moreover, (for the Lord was pleased to see
Such patient tenderness and piety,)

An angel presence every waning day

Upheld the hermit on his arduous way,

Counting his steps ; one, whom the old
man's eyes

Discerned, with wings outspread like flaming
 skies,

Kind strong-stretch'd arms, and pure enraptured
 face

That turned earth's weariness to heav'n's
 best grace.

Then as, his task complete, the hermit
 drooped

Upon the hill-top, that bright angel
 stooped,

Kiss'd him, and brought him food, e'en as
 of yore

The ravens for the prophet fetched their
 store.

In garden plot once, while the recluse
 toiled,

He spied from far a miscreant, chained,
 torn, soiled,

Led to the gallows, pricked on, one for whom
(Whate'er his guilt) had come the blackest
doom.

Down the green paths a rude tumultuous
crowd

Gibed at the wretch, and marred with
hootings loud

That calm-spread valley, where mild low-
ing cows,

Sweet tuneful birds amid the whispering
boughs,

Soft lapping ripples, all made harmony,
But human wrath jangled discordantly.

The hermit paused—a moment watched
the sight—

Derisive sneered: “Ay, serves the villain
right!”

Then turned to ply with zeal his rake and
hoe,

Lest weeds around his favourite rose
should grow.

That eve, when he had filled the jars,
more great

Than erst unto the hermit seemed their
weight.

He tottered as he went ; the path was
steep ;

True, he had delved o'ermuch—he needed
sleep.

Why tarried his kind angel ? Sad his
moan,

Wellnigh he wept. Alas, and thus alone,
Faint-hearted, he must dare the mountain's
brow !

Gone was the daylight, dead the sunset
glow ;

Across the heavens the veil of twilight fell,

Grey, solemn, still, a weird and ghostly
spell,

Whilst o'er each rocky peak of violet
The fierce eye of a gleaming star was
set.

Through that long night all motionless he
lay,

Till darkness passed to dawn : then brake
the day ;

And down the hill-side stumbling, stiff with
pain,

Th' affrighted hermit sought his hut again.

There, on his knees, with hands out-
stretch'd on high,

Fasting he prayed, and rose his bitter cry ;

He searched his heart, eke as he asked the
Lord

How he had erred—whether by deed or
word—

Implored that, for th' unwitting sin forgiven,
given,

His humbled spirit might be duly shriven.

In vain. The angel came not. Pale he
grew,

Dejected, worn with stripes and penance
new ;

Scarce could he stand ; yet oft, in fitful
mood

He crept with slow steps to the chestnut
wood

Hard by.

There, one morn, when the
leaves were brown,

In meditation wrapt, he sat him down.

Sudden, from ruddy copse of autumn gold,

Flew out a bird, a sweet blue bird that
told

Its gladness in so jubilant a strain
The hermit bent his head and wept for
pain.

“ Ah thou ! ” he sobbed, “ thou sing’st of
joy, of grace ;

The Lord from thee hath never turned His
face.

Sing, radiant bird ! Yet tell me how I’ll win
Forgiveness for my deep-repented sin,
So I, like thee, light-hearted, free from
blame,

May in glad cadence praise my God’s
great name ! ”

Replied the bird with clear and noble
song:

“ Wrong hast thou done, yea, hard and
cruel wrong !

A sinner poor and suffering thou didst
spurn,

Thy haughty soul did from his foul deeds
turn.

‘Judgment is mine,’ saith God: ‘ven-
geance is mine.

’Tis mine alone—man! man! it is not
thine!’

Yet hearken, hermit : if thou grieve aright,
Through thine atonement darkness shall
grow light ! ”

Beside the bird an angel stood, down sent
To speak in words the hermit’s punish-
ment :

“ Behold this staff of ashen wood ! Go, pace
The wide world o’er, and crave from place
to place

Thy bitter bread. Take this dry staff—
by day

'Twill prove to thine uncertain steps a stay,
For sleep a pillow. One short night alone,
In each house tarry thou. Haste thee,
begone !

Bear hence the stave till from its stem
shall burst

Three green buds—then, be thou no more
accurst !”

The well-loved voice rang on the hermit's
ear ;

He listened, part in hope and part in fear,
Held out clasp'd trembling hands—the dry
staff they

Enclosed—th' angelic vision passed away.

Then back into the world which he had left

Long years ago, went that poor pilgrim,
reft

Once more of riches, losing righteous
mood,

Peace and self-praise, blest wealth of soli-
tude,

And calm reflection—inward joys that be
Like props unto the soul's serenity.

He begged his way each day from door to
door

Of grudging folk : with him the staff he
bore,

Naught else, and, oft denied a crust of
bread,

On his sad journey was he harshly sped ;
Yet durst he ne'er complain. The staff
was dry,

The snow lay thick ; he turned with tear-
ful eye

To homes he might not share, whence
babes at play
Cried scoffing: "Hence, thou hoary head!
Away!"

At last, from every threshold pushed or
driven,
No crumb, no dole by any kind hand
given,
As fell one cruel wintry eventide,
Within the forest was he fain to hide.
"Here," thought he, "shelter if not food
may be,
So please the Lord, bestowed to-night on
me."
He staggered on, bent double o'er his
stave,
Helpless and weary till he reached a
cave,

Where sat an aged crone.

“ Good dame,” he cried,
“ Pity a wretch who in this world so wide
Finds naught of ruth. O prithee let me
sleep !

My heart’s sore laden, and mine anguish
deep ;

Dim are these eyes, infirm this trembling
frame !

Have mercy ! ”

Thus he pleaded, but the dame
Quoth back : “ Nay, nay ! ” Her cruel
sons she feared ;

Robbers, fierce men were they, who, as
night neared,

Must sure return. Yet presently she
gave

That boon the wanderer piteously did
crave :

A narrow space beneath the rude stone
stair,

To crouch upon and rest. He laid him
there,

And pillowed on his staff his aching
head.

("Twas meagre cushion, ay, and cheerless
bed.)

Anent that cherished staff, much marvelling,
The woman asked and heard. Then did
tears spring

From her eyes' fountains ; sadly as she
sighed,

Her mother-heart grew faint. "My sons!"
she cried ;

"Poor heedless fellows ! If for one light
word

This good man owns such suff'ring from
the Lord,

If of his righteousness naught counts for
gain,

Where shall your place be? What your
future pain?"

At midnight came the robber band; loud
laughed

Those brothers, revelled, cursed, threw
dice, wine quaffed.

But when the fire they lit leaped high and
glowed,

When a strange shadow on the white wall
showed:

"A spy! A traitor!" cried the angry
knaves,

Ready to fall on aught with spears and
staves.

Then the old mother : " Stay ! A sinner
he—

Weak, aged, worn—his penance doth he
dree ;

His burthen's heavy. . ." " Well said,"
shouted they,

Kind from success in murd'rous raids that
day.

" Bring forth the penitent—drink to him !
So !

Greybeard, speak out ! Thy sin we fain
would know."

Up rose the hermit—strange his strength
and new—

Nigh to the flaming logs he slowly drew.
Tall seemed his stature, his grand head
scarce bent ;

His eyes shone with his throbbing heart's
intent,

As in the fireglow red he stood: "Yea,
learn

How none may dare a fellow-creature
spurn!"

Silent his listeners sat; he told the tale
Of one who dwelt serene in sheltered vale,
And had for friend an angel wing'd with
light—

Till, when one morn a wretch was hang'd
in sight,

And he, the good man railed. . . .

Ere he had done,
The robbers hid their faces; one by one
They neared him softly—pale their looks—
afraid,

Hushed, contrite, with unwonted tears each
pray'd

The holy guest to shrive him ; on their
knees

Down fell they all, to earn their sins'
release.

And when the saintly pity of his breast
Took as its own all heinous crimes confess'd,
Exhausted, now the pious deed was done,
He crept back to the couch so bravely won,
'Mid whispered blessing. All around, the
night

Loomed chill and dark, the embers gave
no light,

And in the cave reigned silence ; scarcely
sighed

The wind across shut casements.

That night died
The hermit. When blithe morning dawned,
the sun
Showed those who gazed that his hard task
was done.
As though in sleep he rested, with clos'd
eyes ;
On his wan face a smile of glad surprise.
The withered hands were clasp'd, the tired
brow
Still leaned obedient on the staff, but now
'Twas crowned as for a victor's joy achieved.
Lo ! there a garland circled, fresh, green-
leaved ;
Three buds, three boughs, had blossomed
from the rod,
To prove to men the mercy of their God !

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